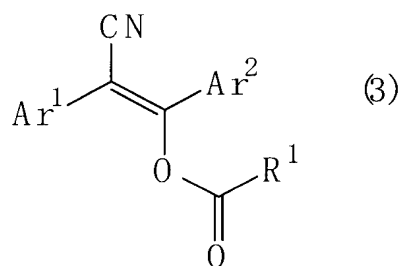


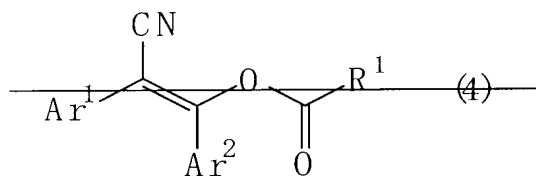
Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

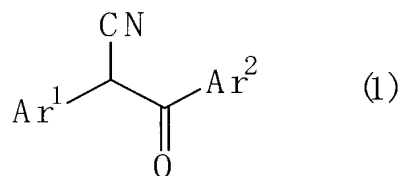
1. (Currently Amended) A process for stereoselectively producing an E-3-acyloxyacrylonitrile compound of formula (3)



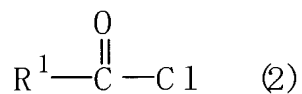
~~or a Z-3-acyloxyacrylonitrile compound of formula (4)~~



which comprises reacting a 3-oxopropionitrile compound of formula (1)



with an acid chloride of formula (2)



wherein

Ar^1 and Ar^2 are independently of each other an aromatic substituent that may be substituted, and R^1 is an alkyl group that may be substituted, or an aromatic substituent that may be substituted, and

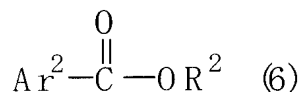
the reaction is conducted with removal of hydrogen chloride as a by-product from the system without using a base, ~~or by using an organic base as a base or an inorganic base of alkali metal or alkaline earth metal as a base, to thereby regulate stereostructure of reaction product.~~

2-4. (Canceled)

5. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 1, wherein the 3-oxopropionitrile compound of formula (1) has been produced by reacting an acetonitrile compound of formula (5)



with an aromatic ester compound of formula (6)



wherein Ar^2 is an aromatic substituent that may be substituted, and R^2 is an alkyl group that may be substituted, by use of alkali metal alkoxide in an aliphatic hydrocarbon solvent, while removing alcohol as a by-product by azeotropic distillation in a separating tank.

6. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 5, wherein said alcohol has been removed in the presence of a polar solvent.

7-16. (Canceled)